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DEPT FOR EUR DAS BRYZA, AND EUR/CARC

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: PUBLIC DEMANDS, INTERNAL RIFTS IN GEORGIA'S
OPPOSITION

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On January 28, opposition leaders laid out the United Council of Opposition's (UNC) demands for electoral and political reforms to the international diplomatic corps. The joint memorandum, to be signed by three opposition presidential candidates and the leaders of 12 opposition parties, is to be presented to Speaker of Parliament Nino Burjanadze on January 29. The demands include 17 points and focus on: overcoming the "non-legitimate results" of the January 5 election, ensuring political freedom, ensuring freedom of speech, and holding fair parliamentary elections. The UNC cautioned that these points do not constitute "ultimata," but rather a basis for negotiations with the government. In a separate meeting with Poloff on January 25, Republican leader David Usupashvili, who has been leading the negotiations with Burjanadze, said he is anxious to reach an agreement with her, in writing, that can be supported quickly and publicly by the Embassy and other international organizations. He also said the UNC is facing serious internal division and assessed that Burjanadze also faces "certain challenges" within her ruling National Movement (UNM). Usupashvili reiterated that if the coming elections are not held freely, the situation could be very dangerous. End Summary.

Opposition Lays Out Demands

¶2. (C) On January 28, the leaders of the United Opposition Council (UNC) called a meeting with the international diplomatic corps to present an advance copy of a statement (faxed to EUR/CARC) they will present to the Georgian government on January 29. The UNC is joined in their statement by the New Rightists/Industrialists and Labor Party. The statement calls for further investigation into alleged violations during the January 5 presidential elections, the release of political prisoners, electoral code reform, and greater transparency and balance in the media. It also calls for the resignation of Minister of Internal Affairs Vano Merabishvili and the Prosecutor General, and the restructuring of both agencies. (Note: It appears the demands were written prior to the exit of former PG Adeishvili. End note.) During the meeting, the UNC stressed that the statement constitutes a basis for discussion with the government and is not an ultimatum. They are committed to a peaceful and constitutional resolution of the crisis, they said, and would resort to further protests only if dialogue fails. They also said they welcomed guidance and input from the international community as the talks proceed. The Republican Party's David Usupashvili said he hoped a political agreement could be reached on all issues by February 15, but acknowledged that practical, fundamental changes, such as electoral code reform, would require more time.

UNM Faces Internal Cracks

13. (C) In a separate meeting on January 25, Republican Party Chairman David Usupashvili, who is leading the negotiations with Burjanadze, told Poloff that he is anxious to reach an agreement with Burjanadze, in writing, that can be supported quickly and publicly by the Embassy and other international parties. He said that the UNC is facing serious internal divisions between the more radical groups and the moderates. Usupashvili noted that his own party may separate from the UNC if the unity maintained until now does not continue. (Note: The joint presentation January 28 in Parliament indicated that the moderates may be gaining the edge over the more radical elements of the UNC. End note.)

14. (C) Usupashvili also said that Burjanadze is also facing dissension within her ruling National Movement (UNM) party in Parliament, due to a disagreement over the makeup of the UNM's party list for the Spring parliamentary elections. Consequently, although Burjanadze remains hopeful regarding the outcome of negotiations, she has her own internal challenges as well.

NDI Looks Ahead, and Back

15. (C) Country Director for the National Democratic Institute, Mary O'Hagan, briefed Poloff and USAID on January 28 that she and the OSCE are both helping mediate the current negotiations between the opposition and UNC. (Note: NDI has

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a large USAID funded program designed to strengthen Parliament. End note.) O'Hagan is also cautiously optimistic regarding the coming, formal negotiations. The negotiations will likely include three MP's from each side. She is planning to hold the meetings this week at a neutral site, perhaps the Tbilisi Marriott.

16. (C) O'Hagan also advised that her staff has data analysis experts who continue to crunch the outcomes of the January 5 elections. Although they are not yet finished, O'Hagan says they have identified some trends of concern. One example is that the voters lists were unable to match a high number of the names to an address (likely due to people having left their village and perhaps even the country.) This information will be mapped geographically and compared to those precincts which experienced extremely high turnout. O'Hagan is working with the Central Election Commission to identify these problems in order to avoid them in the next election.

17. (C) O'Hagan said that in reviewing the parliamentary election system, the UNM is still working to keep a constitutional majority, even if they only win 55 percent of the vote. If the UNM were to use their current advantage to ensure such a majority after the Spring election, O'Hagan and Usupashvili were concerned that this could force people back into the streets in protest.

TEFFT